

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LENDING 00195 231410Z
ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY PARIS
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USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MOPS, MPOL, PFOR, UR, CB, VS, VN
SUBJECT: LENINGRAD LECTURER DISCUSSES VIETNAM-CAMBODIA
CONFLICT

1. IN THE QUESTION PERIOD OF JANUARY 22 LECTURE ON SITU-
ATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (SEPTTEL), SPEAKER WAS ASKED ABOUT
VIETNAM-CAMBODIA CONFLICT. HIS ANSWER WAS INTERESTING
THOUGH FULLY CONSISTENT WITH PAST SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD
THE TWO COUNTRIES.

2. TO EXPLAIN THE CONFLICT, LECTURER RECALLED THAT CAM-
BODIAN COMMUNISTS HAVE REMAINED UNDER STRONG CHINESE
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INFLUENCE FROM THEIR LONG STAY IN CHINA. HE CITED AS
EVIDENCE OF MAOIST SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS AND "CRUEL TERROR," THE
FACT THAT POPULATION OF PHNOM PENH HAS BEEN REDUCED TO
20,000 AND MONEY HAS GIVEN WAY TO BARTER IN WHAT CAMBODIAN
COMMUNISTS DESCRIBE AS BUILDING OF "PERFECT SOCIETY." HE
EMPHASIZED THIS IS TERROR AGAINST ONE'S OWN PEOPLE, NOT A
FOREIGN PEOPLE AS WAS THE CASE WITH U.S. ACTIONS IN VIETNAM.

3. PRESENT CONFLICT INVOLVES AN UNREGULATED PORTION OF THE CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE BORDER WHICH DATES BACK TO EARLY POST-WAR YEARS OF FRENCH RULE. SOME 400,000 VIETNAMESE LIVED ON THE CAMBODIAN SIDE OF THE BORDER. THE CAMBODIANS BEGAN TO KILL OR EXPEL THEM, CAUSING AN ARMY OF REFUGEES TO STREAM INTO VIETNAM LAST NOVEMBER, LEADING TO A LARGE CONFLICT AND VIETNAMESE COUNTER-ATTACK.

4. CHINA ENCOURAGED THE CAMBODIANS. IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT THIS CONFLICT SHARPENED SHORTLY AFTER THE LEADING CAMBODIAN PARTY LEADER HAD RETURNED FROM PEKING, AND AT A TIME WHEN VIETNAM HAD REJECTED THE PRESSURE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON IT BY CHINA TO CEDE SOME OFF-SHORE ISLANDS AND A DISPUTED BORDER AREA. CHINA FEARS THAT VIETNAM WILL EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT ALL OF INDO-CHINA AND THIS WILL NOT BE FAVORABLE (VYGODNO) FOR ITS INTERESTS.

5. CAMBODIA CANNOT BEAT VIETNAM. IT HAS A MUCH SMALLER POPULATION AND VIETNAM IS ARMED WITH SOME \$7 BILLION WORTH OF THE LATEST U.S. WEAPONS. VIETNAM HAD ADOPTED A PROPER POSITION IN THIS CONFLICT. THOUGH THE VICTIM OF AGGRESSION, IT HAS OFFERED TO NEGOTIATE, BUT CAMBODIA HAS HITHERTO REJECTED THE OFFER. BUCHANAN

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